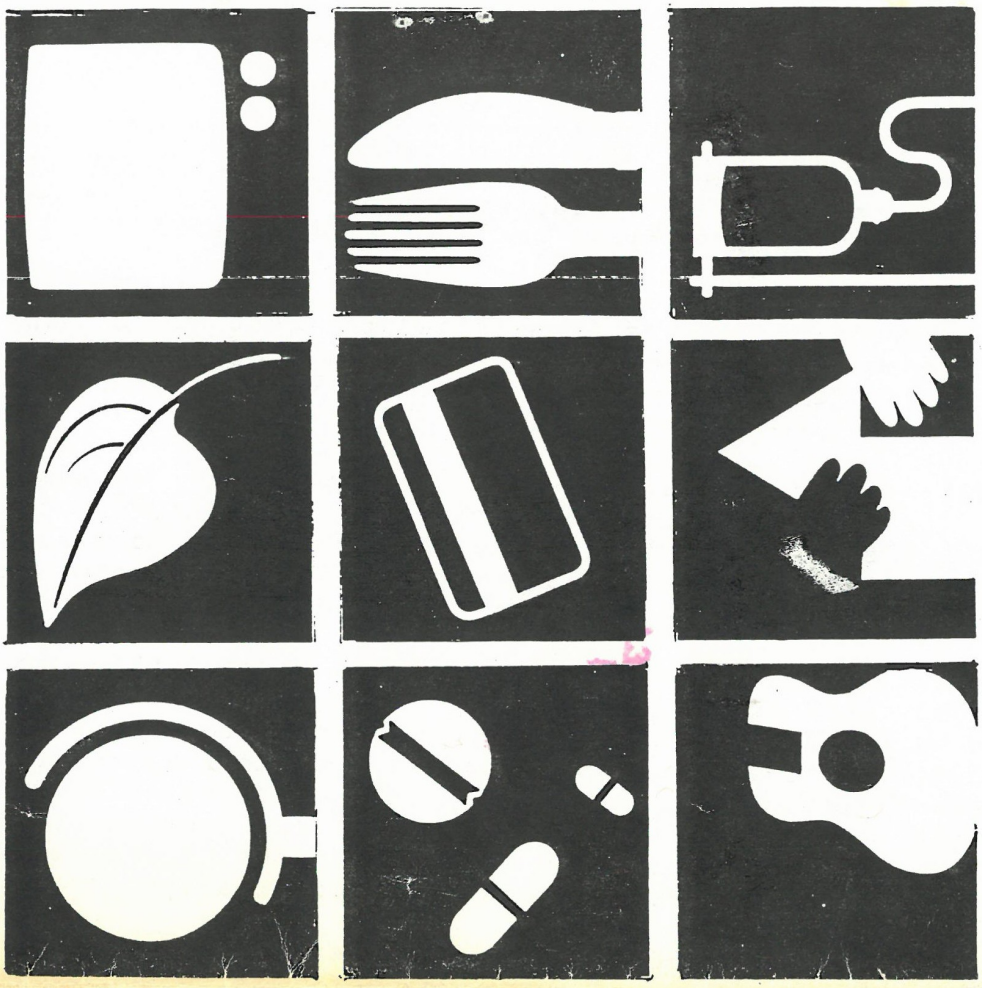
CLOCKWISE

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TIME



NAFTAT
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF TIME
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-PM
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George Lane

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to Clockwise, the official newsletter of NAFTAT. We apologize for the delay in producing it; to be honest, we were unsure of what type of newsletter would be appropriate.

Since our initial media releases of March-April 1989, we have received hundreds of letters from across the continent. Many simply said "well done". The majority expressed surprise that there really were others who felt as they do. And still others offered suggestions and ideas for what NAFTAT should become.

NAFTAT originally started as a conceptual joke; we admit that upfront. Tired of unceasing nostalgia and watered-down mutant visions of the past, we thought it would be amusing to form an organization dedicated to the eradication of nostalgia and the preservation of the future. We weren't expecting anyone to take us seriously.

At first, no one did. Our message was carried throughout the media largely as a novelty item. More than one radio talk show host told us to our face that we were nothing more than a fluff piece; something to fill up space before a commercial. Former Yippie Paul Krassner accused us on the Today Show of being nothing more than uptight, jealous kids seeking our "fifteen minutes of fame". The Los Angeles Reader relegated us to its "News Of The Weird" column; the New York Daily News attacked us editorially.

Yet, the word got out. And people responded. Letters began pouring in, offering help and encouragement. It seemed as though the idea behind NAFTAT was a good one; our message meant more than just "weirdness" to many.

With this in mind, NAFTAT decided to pursue our initial ideas. Our first goal was to wipe out mass nostalgia. Well, we didn't do it. But we did rain on a few parades during the twentieth anniversary of Woodstock. Boycott The Past Week was a modest attempt to put the past in perspective. While it didn't cleanse the airwaves of Crosby, Stills, and Nash, or prevent Wavy Gravy from MCing a fraudulent Woodstock II, it did make for some lively talk radio and nice press coverage. And during that week of August 13-19, our incoming hate mail increased significantly -- a sure sign that we spoiled more than one Boomer's fun. It was great publicity, and helped make NAFTAT known to thousands of others.

This having been accomplished, it is time for us to put the past away for a while. Keeping us from getting carried away with anti-nostalgia was 16-year-old Molly L. of Sylvania OH, who wrote to remind us:

"I empathize with your disgust with nostalgia, but I feel that boycotting the past gives it just as much attention as glorifying it. Wouldn't it be more effective to ignore it and concentrate on the present (AIDS, the environment, apartheid, etc.)?"

Molly is right of course, but we couldn't resist poking a little fun at folks like Phil S., fortysomething, of Chicago, who wrote to tell us that "kids born in the 60s [are] shallow and self-absorbed."

So now that we've done our Boomer-bashing for 1989, let us set

our sights on 1990. This is the last decade of the twentieth century, the end of a millennium. What are the issues facing us? What can we look forward to? And what can NAFTAT do to help?

Within this issue of Clockwise is a questionnaire. Take some time and fill it out. It will give us at NAFTAT a pretty good idea of what is important to both the Boomers and Post-Boomer generations. The results will be printed in the next issue of Clockwise. Perhaps we all will learn something new about ourselves and our parents/children.

NAFTAT's media image is one of "three goofy guys" who have started some kind of wacky organization. That's not how we see it. Sure, it was launched by three goofy guys. But its really your organization now. We can't presume to speak for, about, or to any generation until we get to know you better. It would be great to see NAFTAT become truly a voice of the future, rather than an official anti-past group. But we need your help.

Thank you all for your patience, encouragement, and support.

John Kenney
co-founder
National Association For
The Advancement Of Time

THE NAFTAT/CLOCKWISE QUESTIONNAIRE (Autumn 1989)

1. What will be issues that will affect you directly within the next ten years?
2. What was most enjoyable about the past ten years?
3. What was most disappointing about the pat ten years?
4. What steps can be taken RIGHT NOW to improve the future?
5. Who are the most important figures in the world today? Why?
6. What bothers you most about the present?
7. What bothers you most about the future?
8. Are people generally well-prepared for the future?
9. Does the government adequately address concerns of the future?
10. How would you define the Baby Boom generation?
11. How would you define the post Boom generation?
12. What do people your age have in common?
13. What specific experiences make your age range unique from other ages?
14. Does the prospect of a changing society give you cause for concern?
15. Please share any additional thoughts or comments.

please include your name (optional), age, city of residence, and occupation. Please send responses to: NAFTAT, 6201 Sunset Blvd., Suite 114, Hollywood, California, 90028. The future of NAFTAT rests upon your answers, so your response is greatly needed.

THE TEN QUESTIONS MOST ASKED NAFTAT

Since many of you have written to NAFTAT after seeing small blurbs in magazines and newspapers, we offer our answers to the questions most often asked us by the media. Hopefully it will give you a better understanding of what NAFTAT is and what our basic views regarding past/present/future are. If you want to find out more, or offer criticisms or suggestions, feel free to drop us a line.

What is NAFTAT?

Put simply, NAFTAT is an anti-nostalgia, pro-future, pro-contemporary culture organization.

How was NAFTAT formed?

NAFTAT was conceived in 1987 and launched in March 1989 by three guys in their twenties -- one in New York City, one in Chicago, and one in Los Angeles. It existed primarily as a conceptual organization, formed to protest the excessive attention the past has been given during the 1980s. When response was favorable, we decided to pursue our goals more formally.

Why have you chosen nostalgia as an adversary?

We were concerned by the inroads nostalgia has been making in popular culture, as nostalgia invariably erodes interest in the future. As a culture, we have been entertaining ourselves by playing with the past. This implies a certain lack of faith in the future, a somewhat alarming admission to make.

What was Boycott The Past Week?

Boycott The Past Week was an attempt to call attention to the nation's nostalgia crisis. We simply asked people to give up the past for one week. No oldies radio, no TV shows set in the past, no magazine articles or newspaper features about the past. We also asked that people take note of how many television and print advertisements use songs or images of the past to sell new products. We hoped that by actively attempting to live in the present, people would find out just how difficult it has become to avoid the past.

What do you hope to accomplish?

Our primary concern is to establish a forum for the post-Boom generation, as it is they who must spend the most time in the future. We encourage disenfranchised Boomers to write to us as well, since not everybody who grew up in the 60s wants to stay there forever.

Are you trying to create another generation gap?

No. Nobody wants another generation gap. However, the Baby Boom generation has taken little interest in the concerns and well-being of the generation that has succeeded them and therefore we may have to plot our future without them. NAFTAT does not advocate a philosophy of "don't trust anyone over thirty". That was an unfortunate mistake of the previous generation.

Why should we look to the future?

Because, quite simply, the future is coming and we had better be ready for it. When NAFTAT says future, we're talking about ten

to twenty years from now. There are going to be changes in those years; some pleasant, others not so. It is always better to approach the unknown facing forward rather than backward.

What are your politics?

NAFTAT is neither left wing, nor right wing. We view the adequate preparation for the future as a necessary fact of life; it affects people of all political stripes.

Aren't you going to be nostalgic for the 80s in twenty years?

If we are, I hope some young kids come along and snap us out of it. Who wants to spend the rest of their lives in the past?

MAILBAG

The following are excerpts from the letters we have received in recent months. We present them to you so that you may see what others have to say on the issue.

I hope your organization is serious about moving forward. As a "child of the 60s" I can recall certain positives; however, I also believe that living through that time period left more than a few of my peers with an affliction that I like to call "the anti-success syndrome". Many of us are left with a terrible guilt when we feel ourselves being assimilated into the establishment or whenever we achieve a modicum of financial success. I too suffered from this affliction in the past and have wasted many years that could have been much more productive. I had a real need to remain "hip".

--Koy S., Columbus OH

In the 1990s are we going to be watching "fortysomething" or are we going to be reminiscing about "thirtysomething" as we watch that show's reruns?

It's kinda scary to think about when our grandkids will ask us about the 80s. "Gee Grandpa, the 60s were the rebellious decade, the 70s were the me decade, what were the 80s?" "Well, grandson, ah, um, ah, ah well, ah we were kinda a combination of the worst aspects of both of those generations" (Kinda the rebel against your own identity decade).

--Tom S., Atlanta, GA

I am so sick of my contemporaries trying to force "nostalgia" down my throat, that the next time one of them tries to force me to listen to their Beatles CD collection, I'm liable to become violent. Give me a break! Sure I liked the Beatles (and still do), but there is so much good music being made these days (the Cure, the Replacements, New Order, etc. etc.)

Devo said it most succinctly: "The way we weren't is what we'll become".

--Tom O., Sunnyvale, CA

I may be a baby boomer, but I'll take the 80s. None of my friends are being drafted. The music is better, although one must listen to alternative music stations to find it. The ideas are

fresh and more realistic.

--Virginia B., Decatur, GA

This child's version of history is what we want it to be: a pretend-world of safe, comforting images brought effortlessly to life and endorsed by television. Above all, it is safe; it is known and familiar, and, best of all, it is summoned (and banished) with the touch of a button.

--Frederick U., Gastonia, NC

If you ever say anything unpleasant about Elvis Presley again, you should expect trouble.

--Anonymous, Boston, MA

I picked up a so-called "teen" magazine the other day and almost exploded right there in the store. The models looked like old photos of my parents and the issue was dedicated to the memory of Woodstock. And they had the gall to call this a "teen" magazine!

--Suzanne H., Decatur, GA

What I find upsetting is the respect this event [Woodstock] has garnered with people my age. I was five when "it" happened -- hardly a pivitol moment in my existence. Yet I hear other 25-year-olds rhapsodizing on Woodstock's greatness. How would they know? Ten years from now, these same people will continue to get angry about Kent State, but they won't remember Tiananmen Square.

--Anne B., King Of Prussia, PA

In 1971, I already knew the seeds of 60s nostalgia were germinating and about to erupt like Kudzu. But one night at a Leon Russell concert, I knew I was in the presence of a man whose mind was still moving forward. The Detroit audience kept clamboring for his moldy oldies. Finally, Russell shut the piano lid over the keys and said, "Listen. If all you want to hear is the old shit, go home and put it on the stereo. If you want to hear the new stuff, shut up and listen". I may have been the only one in the crowd who cheered. Unfortunately, that audience attitude is probably why we don't hear much from Russell anymore.

--Paula W., Tampa, FL

A societal outcast like Quasimodo, I wish to pour hot oil on crowds of pudgy, dull-eyed folk who listen to classic rock. I would scream, "It's not that you listen...but that you listen like sheep!"

When is the 25th anniversary of LBJ picking his dogs up by the ears? Don't tell me, I don't want to know.

Do you really think time can resume?

Do you recall the boomers laughing at their elders for driving showy cars and listening to Lawrence Welk?

Can I please, PLEASE, walk in some place of entertainment and hear NEW music?

--Mark S., Royal Oak, MI

SICK OF THE SIXTIES

The thought of Woodstock gives this group a big chill

BY SAM WHITING
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Gene Dillenburg is dreading the 20th anniversary of Woodstock this summer the way a shy person dreads a class reunion.

Dillenburg, 29, of Chicago, is one of three dues-paying members of NAFTAT (the National Association for the Advancement of Time), which loathes baby boomers as a species, the '60s in general and Woodstock in particular.

"It's just become this big retro trip," he says. "A bunch of pudgy women in peace sign earrings."

NAFTAT has declared August 13 to 19 "Boycott-the-Past Week" and is prepared to run afoul of a generation of boomers who were either at the festival or saw the film enough times to fake it.

"Woodstock was a half-million stoned hippies wallowing in the mud," he quips. "Not a scene I would like to make."

> *'It's bad enough living in the past. Living in someone else's past is worse.'*
>
> — Bruce Elliott

Dillenburg and his cohorts expect the airwaves to become so burdened with Woodstock worship that the whole fantasy will finally sink into infamy and take "thirtysomething," "The Wonder Years" and the Rascals reunion tour along with it.

"We're hoping it will ring the death knell for '60s nostalgia," says Dillenburg, whose philosophy runs firmly counter to the counterculture. Adds cofounder Bruce Elliott, 28, of Los Angeles, "It's bad enough living in the past. When you're living in someone else's past, that's even worse."

The NAFTAT creed is defined by two new clichés:

- Just Say Now.
- All Decades Are Created Equal.

NAFTAT stands firmly against the onslaught of syrupy '60s regurgitation, from "The I Ching" to Bob Greene's 1964 high school diary, "Be True to Your School."

"What makes being in high school in 1964 any better than graduating in '74 or '84?" asks Dillenburg. "It's typical Aquarian imperialism."

He then poses a question to the ages: "What is the point of bringing back 'Hair' when half the cast members have to wear wigs?"

Insights like these have brought national attention to three pals who developed NAFTAT as "something to talk about on the phone late at night," according to the third member, John Kenney, 23, of Queens, N.Y.

Since printing a few flyers in April "as a complete, joking lark," they have been featured on CBS News, "The Today Show," CBS's "This Morning" and dozens of radio programs, and have commented on the Woodstock anniversary, August 16 to 18 on the Showtime cable, BBC and Australian television.

"We have been asked our opinions on everything from the status of today's youth to how we view the past, to what do we think about the future," says Kenney, a bartender who is quite surprised to be named an arbiter of modern culture.

USA Today ran a guest editorial by Dillenburg with an accompanying rebuttal by one of those "stoned hippies wallowing in the mud." In the article, titled "Face-Off: Baby Boomers vs. Boomer Bashers," Dillenburg wrote: "The USA is mired in a tar pit of nostalgia. . . . As a people, we cannot move forward until we cast off the dead weight we drag behind."

The rebuttal, by free-lancer Jim Moore, characterizes the boomer bashers succinctly. "They are jealous because we had the real Elvis, while they have to wait to meet his ghost in the produce section at Safeway."

Author and '60s advocate David Harris, of Mill Valley — who missed the mud-wallowing while in jail for resisting the draft (but was issued saintly onstage praise by his then-wife, Joan Baez) — calls NAFTAT a "good idea attached to a bad notion. Why blame the '60s for what a bunch of 1990 radio programmers are doing?" he asks. "It's not our fault."

Dillenburg attaches the blame to all people who think the "good old days" ended at Altamont. "We don't want people to lean to the left or lean to the right," he says. "We want them to lean forward." He drips NAFTAT propaganda the way Bob Dylan could drip rhymes like "The pump don't work 'cause the vandal took the handle."

NAFTAT has struck a sympathetic cord. A splinter group called "twentysomething" is rumored to be operating in Iowa. Elliott has received sympathetic mail with brief exclamations like "All right!" or "It's about time. I thought I was the only one." But there are also lectures to the ingrates. "We gave you the '65 Mustang and the power of love," said one.

"It's this year's media silly-season story," says Todd Gitlin, professor of sociology at the University of California at Berkeley and author of "The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage." "This is an amazing amount of publicity for a three-man band."

Even Kenney agrees. "We thought it was just a way to poke fun at the generation that lived through the '60s," he says. "Now we're portrayed as these young upstarts who are just blasting everything."

Paul Krassner, father of the underground press, dismisses NAFTAT as a passing fancy of the "MTV attention-span generation."

"The irony of it is they sound like a fad," he says, "and they're attacking a social, political and cultural revolution as if it were a fad. The interest in that period will far outlive their cute little game."

Krassner then throws a dart. "We wore our jeans out. We didn't pay extra so they'd have rips in them."

Kenney returns fire. "They like to point to us as a zonked generation that sits in front of MTV. That's just a small segment, like the group of people in the '60s who didn't know what was going on — they were sitting in front of the TV watching the Monkees."

See Page B6, Col. 1

BY UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL

'The Wonder Years,' starring Fred Savage and Josh Saviano, cashes in on '60s nostalgia.

Not a Bunch of Yuppies

The popular misconception is that NAFTAT is a yuppie group of snotty Realtors who ridicule, via car phone, those wayward dinosaurs on the reverse track. Untrue.

Dillenburg is a registrar at a small college in Chicago. Kenney is enrolling at the University of New Mexico (not one of your investment-bank feeder schools) to study archeology. Elliott, their "West Coast director," trains handicapped Asians in Los Angeles. With their aggregate income, they couldn't swing a fax machine.

Elliott and Kenney are recovering Beatlemaniacs of the second-generation "post-Lennonist era." They met at a Beatlefest in Secaucus, N.J., three summers ago. Their common thought was: "What are we doing hanging around with these misfits?"

"So many of the people at these conventions were spending their lives as if it were 1964," says Kenney. "We don't think Americans should be sitting around wishing they were at Woodstock."

But that is precisely the case, says Jeffrey Shurtleff, who welcomed to Woodstock "friends of the draft-resistance revolution," and sang "Drugstore Truck-Driving Man" with Joan Baez.

"People constantly come up to me and their eyes are just enormous," says Shurtleff, owner of Central Park Books in San Mateo and Palo Alto. "Maybe it's the need to have history simplified for us in pill form. People are hypnotized by the myth of Woodstock."

The idea to discredit the myth festered from the Beatlefest until May 1987, when Elliott and Dillenburg visited a new-wave club in Detroit. The DJ played an old Rolling Stones tune. That did it. They couldn't avoid the '60s even in a punk club.

Unlikely Allies

The NAFTAT movement has found some unlikely allies. Pop-culture critic Greil Marcus of Berkeley buys the philosophy, even though it is *his* past that NAFTAT must endure.

"These people are being oppressed by the marketing managers of my generation," says Marcus, who attended the Big Three — the Beatles' final concert at Candlestick, Woodstock and Altamont. "What's being sold is a secondhand myth of some period when people were 'free.' It's like saying history ended some time ago and all that's left are footnotes."

One man whose history *was* made at Woodstock is Country Joe McDonald, of Berkeley. He was the only person to perform twice, once with the Fish and once solo. Country Joe was known thereafter for altering the Fish Cheer to another four-letter F-word.

"Those three days were great," he says. "The rest of the year was a bummer."

Country Joe is all for Boycott-the-Past Week.

"I'm sick of Woodstock myself," he says.

And he has a complaint, too, about the onslaught of '60s music.

"They are playing the same tracks over and over again." Never any Country Joe records.

San Francisco Chronicle

Friday, June 23, 1989

I read the other day about an antinostalgia organization called the National Association for the Advancement of Time, run by three men in their twenties who would just as soon the sixties recede. One of them, John Kinney, a bartender in Queens, lamented that "the eighties pop culture is so firmly entrenched in the sixties that kids who would otherwise be discovering the world around them are wishing they had gone to Woodstock." Another, Eugene Dillenburg, the registrar at a little college in Chicago, added the obvious by saying, "The boomers are a big market so advertisers want to reach them. Radio wants advertisers so they pander to the boomers. Here in Chicago we have eight or nine oldie stations, which leaves little room for what we call the eighties culture." The group got a patch of publicity and all of a sudden they were being attacked editorially. One newspaper asked sarcastically what would these young men have to look back on, oat bran and fax machines? That's not fair. I'm not a fan, but I understand the importance of Madonna and Springsteen. And though I haven't found it, I'm told there's a whole lot of hip but obscure music out there.

I hope to become a card-carrying member of the National Association for the Advancement of Time. They look like a life preserver in this tidal wave of memories. I see there's a show called *Legends in Concert* presently touring the country. John Lennon impersonators. Elvis impersonators. Marilyn Monroe impersonators. All dead people onstage. Gad! Let us go forward, leaving room, of course, for the occasional evocative moment. Besides, the only thing I'm truly certain was better in the sixties was the journalism.

LIFE

August 1989
Volume 12, Number 9

Wasted on the young

The National Association for the Advancement of Time wants to "make nostalgia a thing of the past." Specifically, nostalgia about the '60s. Apparently unable to create their own culture, these members of the younger generation are blasting that of the baby boomers. "If they want to live in their past, that's fine — but they're forcing *me* to live in their past," said NAFTAT's founder. The group, fortunately, has only three members. But the movement could grow as the new *me* generation grows. Tsk. Still, maybe one shouldn't be too hard on them. Consider their limited horizons. Years from now, they'll try to wax nostalgic, too. And what will they have to remember? Fax machines. Compact-disc players. Cellular phones. And oat bran.

DAILY NEWS

Wednesday, April 19, 1989

. . . . It was bound to happen: Three young **BABY-BOOM BASHERS** have formed the National Association for the Advancement of Time. Claiming our obsession with the boomers' wonder years—from their music to their fashion—is crushing the creativity of *this* generation, they're out to make nostalgia a thing of the past. We say, bash away! The '80s were like one giant flashback—let's hope that the '90s have an identity of their own. . . .

AUGUST 1989

Mademoiselle

Lowering the Boom on Things Past

Los Angeles Times
Tuesday, August 1, 1989

By MICHELLE M. MILLER,
Times Staff Writer

Kiss the '60s goodby: Some nostalgia busters have arrived and are suiting up to make Baby Boomers' beloved sentimentality a thing of the past.

The National Assn. for the Advancement of Time—a group formed by John Kenney, 25, of New York; Bruce Elliot, 27, of Los Angeles; and Eugene Dillenburg, 29, of Chicago—has proclaimed Aug. 14-20 as "Boycott the Past Week."

During that period, the group wants Americans to "forgo the past," Kenney says. Don't "listen to oldies radio, watch movies or TV series set in the past, read articles written about the past and when you see an advertisement that's set to '60s music or totes a '60s theme, change the channel or turn the page."

His group doesn't have anything against the '60s, "it's just the '80s preoccupation" with that period "that upsets us," Kenney says, explaining that "If nostalgia is left unchecked, people will begin to neglect the issues that face us in the present. People are using nostalgia as an escape from the problems that plague our society today."

A 'Glamorous' Time

Lee Gold, an associate clinical professor of psychiatry at USC, agrees, observing, "The past has been romanticized. The good ol' days, which were not so good anyway, are easier to deal with because the present isn't comfortable for us. The '40s were when this generation came of age. So as we get older, those times seem more glamorous to us because of our youth."

Kenney says his group, with its campaign, is seeking two results: "People will see how hard it is to avoid images of the past, and we hope some people will see how consumed they are and put an end to their misery."

What do group members find especially annoying? "Oh, the American Express commercials moving to the tunes of 'My Girl' and 'Be My Baby'," Kenney says. "TV shows like 'The Wonder Years' and 'China Beach'; miniskirts; Batman T-shirts; and classic rock."

Since it began last March, the association has found a receptive ear among the media, receiving coverage in local newspapers and broadcast outlets, USA Today, the "Today Show" and "CBS This Morning." The publicity the group has received also has prompted heavy mail from those who want to join. The association claims it has 280 members nationwide, as well as in Canada and Australia.

For Some, Quixotic Decade Has Worn Out Its Welcome

By Drew Jubera
Staff Writer

The '60s: history's longest running decade, stares down at today's youth like the bloodshot eye of an Orwellian Big Brother. The fallout is everywhere. Oldies rock radio back to the '60s. TV recycled fashion (the dives, mini-skirts, ponytails on men); baby boomer ads for cereal ("You don't have to be a kid to love 'em") and so many anniversary retrospectives at sometimes seems Neil Armstrong was the first astronaut to land on the stage at Woodstock. Or was it Altamont? As with any cloying presence, the '60s are enough to make some people a little paranoid.

"Are we going to have to watch the nostalgic yearnings of the baby boom generation until they start to *die off*?" asks John Kinney, a 24 year-old officer with the National Association for the Advancement of Time (NAFTAT), the loosely organized, media-fed grass-roots group with the bad acronym that's dedicated to the overthrow of overheated nostalgia.

"Young people are saying, 'Let's get out of the shadow of the baby boom,'" adds Mr. Kinney, a Los Angeles bartender. "We've been made to feel inferior. We should look at nostalgia as an addiction. We're saying, 'Let's just *break* this addiction.'"

Toward that end, NAFTAT has declared next week "Boycott the Past Week." It's timed to correspond with the 20th anniversary of Woodstock, a red-letter date Mr. Kinney hopes will signal the end of the current infatuation with the '60s. NAFTAT suggests people who are sick of the '60s participate in the boycott with (and here even NAFTAT can't avoid tossing around a little '60s jargon) "active and passive resistance."

Active resistance requires monitoring the media for "nostalgic content." For instance, if someone on talk radio begins to wax sentimental about the past — "There hasn't been any good music since 1969" is a favorite — people are urged to call the station and remind the person, "It's over."

Passive resistance can be accomplished simply by avoiding nostalgia in any form. This includes oldies radio, revival theater, vintage clothing stores, ads that trade on nostalgia, TV shows devoted to the '60s or aging baby boomers (or any show that is "an excuse to play some Motown records," Mr. Kinney says) and historical retrospectives in newspapers and magazines (to stand apart on newsstands, Smart magazine put on its latest cover: "Absolutely Nothing in This Issue About Woodstock!")

But violent demonstration is discouraged.

"That's what they did in the '60s," says Eugene Dillenburg, 29, NAFTAT's eldest statesman and a registrar at a Chicago technical college. "It didn't work then, so we don't want to do it now."

"We think people will be surprised how hard it is to avoid the past," observes Mr. Kinney. "After a week, maybe people will decide to live in the present."

Obsessiveness with the past is a condition the three NAFTAT founders are intimate with. Though each is under 30 and at one time lived in New York, Chicago and Los Angeles, they met through their common interest in Beatles memorabilia. Traveling to Beatlefests and meeting Beatle obsessives introduced them not only to each other, but to nostalgia's creepier side.

"It was pathetic," recalls NAFTAT's Bruce Elliot, a 27-year old social worker in Los Angeles. "We saw people more interested in pretending they were *living* in the past than in *collecting* things from the past. There was too much necrophilia going on."

The notion for NAFTAT was born in May 1987 at a Beatles collectors convention in Detroit. After finding what Mr. Elliot describes as Detroit's "one new music bar," the three were sitting there when an old Rolling Stones song suddenly boomed from the sound system. Mr. Elliot wondered aloud if there was no escaping the '60s. Then was surprised to hear his two friends wonder the same thing.

"I thought I was the only one," he remembers.

It was then that they noticed how pervasive the 20 year old decade had become.

"We even drove over to Windsor and saw a '60s dance bar there," says Mr. Kinney. "Canada's living through a nostalgia that's not even theirs. They look at it almost as American imperialism."

Since the group was first publicized after handing out anti-'60s tracts at a Chicago avant garde theater, it has received more than 400 letters. It had no other aim at the time than to inform people that it was "fed up with classic rock, 20th anniversaries and Bob Greene."

Now NAFTAT is putting together a newsletter. And while the founders didn't start it as a moneymaker (there's no membership fee, and the only money they've made so far is from an article they wrote for Penthouse), they wouldn't mind cashing in. "If Abby Hoffman could get $3,000 for talking at colleges about the '60s, we should be able to get *something*," says Mr. Elliot with a sigh.

Those who've written to NAFTAT range from Buckminster Fuller groupies, Trekkies and other futurists; baby boomers angry with the group for desecrating their icons ("We are," says Mr. Dillenburg); and post-baby boomers sharing NAFTAT's frustration.

"There's a lot of 14- and 15 year-olds saying my parents won't shut up about the '60s," Mr. Dillenburg says. "We even hear from elderly people saying they're tired of hearing their children whining."

At its gluttonest, NAFTAT sees nostalgia reducing America to a pale, bygone shadow of itself, in the tradition of other once-proud empires, like England.

"It could become like pre-World War II Vienna," Mr. Kinney says. "Vienna in the late 19th century was a cosmopolitan center. Then it failed to embrace the new technology, fell behind, realized it was going to lose its standing in the world, and its people embraced the glory of Vienna's past."

Mr. Elliot adds dryly, "It's the kind of thing that kept the Dark Ages going for a thousand years."

But mostly the group sees the current nostalgia as growth stunting, self-indulgent bullying on the part of aging baby boomers (NAFTAT defines baby boomers as those who went to high school during the '60s. Mr. Elliot, born 1964, and Mr. Dillenburg, born 1960, call themselves "former baby boomers" who are now part of "generation X.") NAFTAT sees '60s nostalgia as cluttering the space available for whatever cultural innovation "generation X" comes up with. And the more the nostalgic reflex is indulged, the more it accelerates.

Mr. Elliot points to a recent "Deja Video" presentation on MTV that replayed the network's best videos since 1982.

"Now," he says, "18 year-olds can look back to when they were *12*."

Looking back fondly on the past is one thing, NAFTAT says. But using the past as the only thing worth living for is quite another.

"People have been nostalgic since shortly after time began," allows Mr. Dillenburg. "But we believe all decades are created equal. If you honestly like the Monkees better than Talking Heads, fine. But if you like the Monkees and don't even know who the Talking Heads are, you need NAFTAT."

Whether this decade's appetite for the '60s will turn more monstrous in the '90s is something else NAFTAT is monitoring. Mr. Elliot can see a future where baby boomers, because of their demographic dominance, continue to push themselves on everyone else — a time when TV is filled with slick, stylized denture ads and cereal is marketed by stuffing the boxes with such adult toys as cholesterol counters.

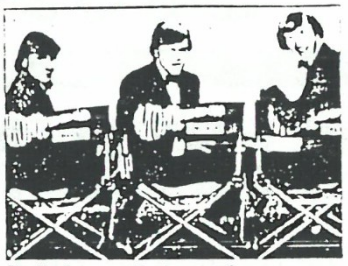
But NAFTAT believes the worst that could happen is a nostalgic dusting from the '70s. Already the signs are dire. In Los Angeles, there's a store called Have a Nice Day devoted to '70s gizmos and fashion, including happy faces, leisure suits, gourd-shaped transistor radios, disco music and modular furniture. There are also dance clubs there that play '70s music exclusively; one held a Peoples Temple 10th anniversary party and served Kool-Aid from a vat.

NAFTAT fears it could get worse: Partridge Family reunions, Bee Gees conventions, Pink Floyd T-shirts....

"You'll know enough is enough" levels Mr. Elliot, "when you get the 20th anniversary of the Font."

To contact NAFTAT, write 6201 Sunset Blvd., 114, Hollywood, Calif. 90028.

Faces That Are All Too Familiar



The Monkees are still going around.

McCarthy

Yoko Ono

Sonny Bono

Dick Cavett

Jane Fonda

Kurt Vonnegut

The Atlanta Journal AND CONSTITUTION
THURS., AUGUST 10, 1989

A FEW WORDS ABOUT THE FOUNDERS

During the past few months we have received dozens of letters inquiring about the background and circumstances of NAFTAT's founders. We hope that this will help end the speculations and accusations we have received (i.e. yuppies, radicals, punks, etc., etc.)

BRUCE ELLIOTT: Former baby-boomer Bruce Elliott understands obsessive addiction to the past. He's been there and has no intension of going back. Raised in recession-ravaged Detroit, his advice for the future is: save money.

JOHN KENNEY: A veteran of the service-sector, John has tried his hand as a tutor, cab driver, free-lance writer, telemarketer, activist, and bartender. Now 24, he commutes frequently between New York and Los Angeles, in search of a future. Cynical and rude, he describes himself as "a product of my times". Favorite color: grey.

EUGENE DILLENBURG: Lifelong Cubs fan, Gene Dillenburg spends his time listening to Bananarama and collecting neckties. Outspoken and dangerous, he has become a sturdy anchor in a sea of distortion. A firm believer in brevity, Gene offers no further biographic information. The other two guys can vouch for him, though.